

Timing, teamwork and a whole lot of seed

When fire crews douse the last sparks of a fire and the embers finally cool off, another equally important crew is waiting in the wings to converge on the fire site and get to work. They are the members of BLM's Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation team, and every person plays a crucial role in assessing what needs to be done post-fire because every area has a unique set of challenges.

The Players: Hydrologists and soil scientists assess things like possible water and wind erosion and flooding or mud slide potential. Range specialists analyze the grazing aspect of the area. Archaeologists bring knowledge of the site's history and determine how to best preserve and protect existing artifacts and cultural sites. For instance, if a historical structure, such as a Native American camp site or a historical cabin has a stream running by it, how might the fire have impacted the landscape and could it result in erosion, flooding or destruction of the archaeological site? Vegetation specialists design seed mixes best suited for each ecological site. Wildlife biologists also are called in to determine what wildlife exists in an area and where the priorities for planting should be.



A helicopter drops off one seeder and picks up a full one to continue seeding Wyoming big sagebrush. Tens of thousands of acres were aerial seeded in high priority wildlife areas in the 250,000-acre 2006 Winters Fire east of Midas. BLM photo by Tom Warren.

Seize the Day: Within seven days after a fire is contained, the team has visited the fire site, assessed the damage and submitted a preliminary plan outlining their strategy. Within three weeks after the fire is contained, the final, approved plan is in place and the team begins implementing emergency stabilization efforts, such as completing cultural inventories of areas where BLM will disturb the ground during activities like fencing and ground seeding. Strategies and prioritizations also are developed for treating weeds, repairing fences or erecting temporary fences to protect new growth from grazing animals.

"There is a lot to consider when we enter a burned area: how hot the fire burned, whether

there are noxious weeds present, whether the vegetation will come back on its own," Tom Warren, rehabilitation manager of BLM's Elko Field Office, said. "First, we identify life and safety issues. We focus on erosion issues that may affect residences

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

In This Issue:

Inmate Horse Trainers • 3
Reorganization • 4
Wells Quake • 5
Fire Rehab • 6
Mine Hazard • 8
Volunteers • 10



State Director's Column

We've seen changes in the West during the past decade: more people and increasing demand for public land resources, especially nontraditional resources such as recreation and energy. The BLM is making some changes that we believe will help us better manage the public lands. BLM Nevada is moving from a two-tier organization that consists of a state office and field offices to an organization of state office, district offices and field offices. The House Subcommittee on Appropriations for Interior and the Environment approved three-tiered organizational proposals for BLM management in Alaska, California, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming.

There are good reasons for these changes. One is to create consistently structured state organizations BLM wide, which will benefit customers working on multi-state projects, as well as provide a more effective career ladder for BLM staff. Another good reason is to provide a multi-disciplinary team and line manager for a geographical area. This will provide better service for our customers and result in decisions "closer to the ground."

Many things won't change: the offices will stay in the same locations, but there will be some new names; district boundaries will stay the same except for a change in the Black Rock area. The entire Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area will now be managed under the Winnemucca District. For the most part, customers will be working with many of the people they've worked with in the past.

In recognition of the growing community and public land issues in the Pahrump area, the Las Vegas Field Office, which will be renamed the Southern Nevada District Office, will establish a Pahrump Field Office. For the time being, the staff will be housed in Las Vegas. A map and chart showing the new district and field office names and boundaries is included in this issue.

Moving to a three-tier organization will have minimal cost and minimal impact on the customers we serve and our employees. We expect the transition for all of our districts to be completed by October 1, 2008. A lot of the effort will be internal paperwork for such things as position descriptions and changing organizational codes.

The reorganization is part of BLM's Managing for Excellence Initiative which started in November 2006. Other components include creating a new National Operations Center (NOC) in Denver, Colorado. The NOC will consolidate certain aspects of our Human Resources functions such as advertising vacancies, centralize major procurement, and consolidate some of our Information Resources Management functions. With shrinking budgets these actions will reduce the cost for providing these services while providing our agency consistent service.

It is essential for BLM to adapt to change so we can be responsive to the American people. We believe this restructuring will help us meet our obligation to manage natural resources on your public lands.

– Ron Wenker

Nevada Sage is published by the Nevada State Office, Bureau of Land Management.

Questions, comments and requests may be mailed to:

Editor

BLM Office of Communications

P.O. Box 12000 • Reno, NV 89520-0006

Email: jworley@nv.blm.gov

Office: 1340 Financial Blvd

Phone: 775-861-6515

Ron Wenker - State Director

Amy Lueders - Associate State Director

Doran Sanchez - Chief, Communications

JoLynn Worley - Editor

Design by MeshCreative www.meshcreative.com

BLM/NV/GI-07/04+1120

Working the Wildness Out of Each Other

Nevada Inmates Train Wild Horses for New Owners

Folks in the market for a new horse would be hard-pressed to find a better deal than to adopt a saddle-trained mustang off the ranges of Nevada. Strong, hard-footed and alert, these horses, some only four or five months removed from the wild, are part of a unique success story involving three agencies with quite different missions.

The Nevada Department of Corrections/Silver State Industries, the Nevada Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management have coordinated a wild/estrays horse training school since 2001. Housed in corrals on the grounds of the Warm Springs Correctional Facility (WSSC) in Carson City, inmates prepare groups of horses that are selected from hundreds of horses that have been gathered off either state lands or federal public lands. Three annual "classes" of about 15 horses each emerge from the school "green-broke" after receiving up to four months of intensive training. Each horse is then offered to the public at competitive auction during an adoption event at WSSC.

"These horses get a lot more daily hands-on training from the inmates than most people would ever be able to afford to pay for private training outside the prison," said Hank Curry, life-long cowboy and lead horse trainer for Silver State Industries. "New owners get a great animal because we're talking about eight hours of training a day for four months. But we see great results beyond just what the horses learn. The inmates themselves are changed by the experience of bonding with these wild animals."

Most of the inmates have little or no exposure to horses before they apply for the program – they are usually urbanites from Las Vegas or Reno/Sparks. Many come to the corrals hard-headed, self-centered and impatient with little self esteem.

"It can be a life-changing experience to successfully train a half ton of four-legged wild animal that starts out as untrusting as you are," said Curry, "especially for inmates that come here not knowing which end the bridle goes on."



Young girl pets a saddle-trained wild horse at the February adoption.

According to Tim Bryant, supervisor of Silver State Industries, it is considered a privilege to work for Hank at the corrals. There is a waiting list of inmates who wish to become a wrangler.

"These men learn a lot about themselves," said Bryant. "And they gain valuable skills that help them when they return to the general population. We've had 135 inmates pass through the program while successfully training over 300 horses. Some of the guys have even started their own horse training businesses when they got out."

The daily program work by the inmates is reflected in the amount that the public bids for the horses. While the starting bid for a wild horse at the adoption events is \$150, bids have exceeded \$4,000, with the average price is in the range of about \$800 to \$2,000 per animal. These funds go back to off-set the costs associated with the training program.

The February adoption event drew more than 200 people and raised \$15,000. Each inmate trainer and horse demonstrate their newly developed skills at the auction. The next auction will be on October 11. Come out and see how some tough love and training can result in a great riding companion!

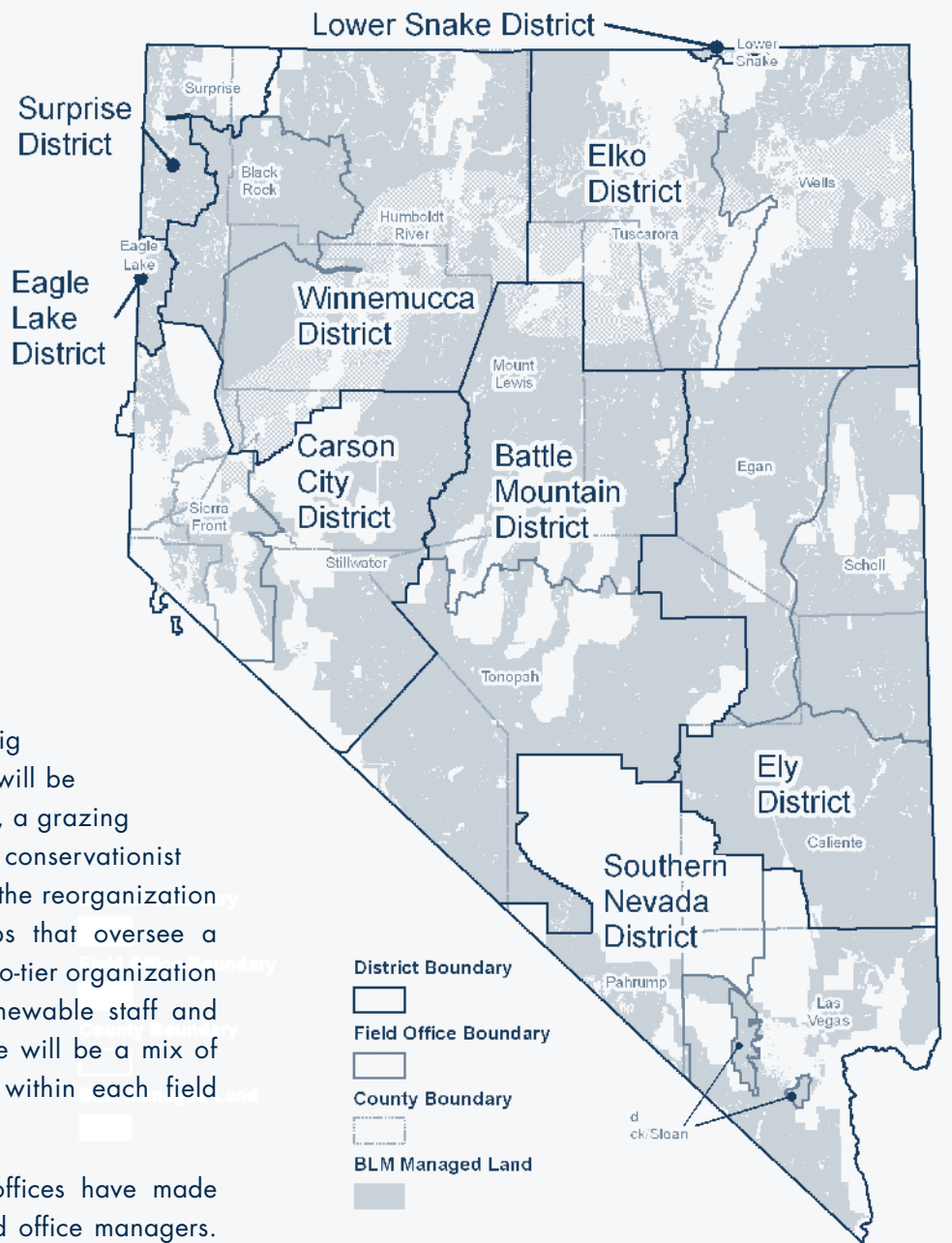
Mark Struble
Carson City Field Office

Organizational Changes Coming to BLM

BLM Nevada is moving from a two-tier organization that consists of a state office and field offices to a three-tier organization of state office, district offices and field offices. There are no changes to the state office organization. What were field offices will become district offices and continue to be located at the same addresses. The district offices will have defined regions that will become field offices. The newly designated field offices will be housed at the district offices with the exception of the Caliente and Tonopah field offices which are detached and remain at their same locations.

The reorganization won't mean big changes for public land users. There will be some personnel changes; for example, a grazing permittee may have a different range conservationist or line manager. One of the goals of the reorganization is to set up multi-disciplinary groups that oversee a portion of the district. Under the old two-tier organization BLM offices were divided by non-renewable staff and renewable staff. Under three-tier there will be a mix of non-renewable and renewable staff within each field office.

The Elko, Battle Mountain and Ely offices have made the move to three-tier and named field office managers. We expect all the changes to be in place by the end of September.





Elko District Office, Elko

Ken Miller, district manager
Tuscarora Field Office
Kathy Gunderman, field manager
Wells Field Office
Bryan Fuell, field manager

Battle Mountain District Office, Battle Mountain

Jerry Smith, district manager
Mount Lewis Field Office
Doug Furtado
Tonopah Field Office, Tonopah
Tom Seley, field manager

Ely District Office, Ely

John Ruhs, district manager
Egan Field Office
Jeff Weeks, field manager
Schell Field Office
Caliente Field Office, Caliente
Ron Clementine, field manager

Winnemucca District Office, Winnemucca

Gail Givens, district manager
Humboldt River Field Office
Black Rock Field Office

Carson City District Office, Carson City

Don Hicks, district manager
Stillwater Field Office
Sierra Front Field Office

Southern Nevada District Office, Las Vegas

Mary Jo Rugwell, district manager
Las Vegas Field Office
Red Rock/Sloan NCA Field Office
Pahrump Field Office

Incident Command System Provides Quick Response to Earthquake Disaster

Everyone in Wells, Nevada was awake at 6:15 a.m. on February 21. The whole town got a shaking that might only be duplicated by standing on an off-balance washing machine on the spin cycle. The epicenter of a magnitude 6 earthquake hit about 11 miles east of the historic town center.

"It felt like riding a train and going in between the boxcars and having to hold on to the rails," said BLM Ranger Carrie Pope. "The ground was moving so much you could only stand up if you had something to hold on to." Pope was part of an inter-agency law enforcement team that provided public safety and patrolled damaged vacated buildings at night.

BLM Wells Fire Station Supervisor Mike Pope quickly assessed the damage at the station, which was minor—a broken window, computer monitor and underground water line. Once the water line repair was under way, the staff became heavily involved in relief efforts for the town. The station became a staging area for incoming supplies and sleeping quarters for fire crews.

Within two hours, a Unified Incident Command was established and headed by Elko County Sheriff Dale Lotspeich and Nevada Division of Forestry Incident Commander Rich Harvey. In less than three hours, food, water, Porta-potties and blankets were on the way to Wells, dispatched by BLM's Elko Interagency Dispatch Center.

Other areas of the city did not fare as well as BLM's fire station. The historic district as well as numerous buildings around town received significant damage. There were gas leaks and the municipal water system was nonfunctional. About 200 residents moved into an emergency shelter.

Only three minor injuries occurred, the worst being a broken arm. Many state, local and federal agencies responded and were on scene within the first 24 hours including American Red Cross, Elko County Sheriff's Office, Nevada Division of Forestry, Nevada Department of Public Safety, Nevada Department of Transportation, Nevada Division of Emergency Management, U.S. Geological Survey and Federal Emergency Management Agency among others.

Mike Brown
Elko District Office

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and transportation routes. We then identify areas that are not likely to recover naturally following a wildfire.”

The key to stabilizing an area after a fire is seeding. Ground seeding must occur before the ground freezes, while aerial seeding stretches into the winter months, allowing the moisture to trap and help imbed the seeds into the ground. Revitalizing an area with plant growth immediately is important for two reasons: preventing weeds, such as cheatgrass, from taking over sites; and preventing erosion, or loss of good top soil, which increases flooding that can affect houses, roads and human safety since the ground can be unstable.

The BLM does its best to seed an area with native species, such as grasses and plants, like Indian rice grass or



Drill seeding on the Hepworth Fire near Metropolis north of Wells. About 4,000 acres were seeded with a mix of Indian ricegrass, Sherman big bluegrass, Snake River wheatgrass, Great Basin wild rye and blue flax.

2007 FIRE SEASON BY THE NUMBERS:

Elko 2007 (the area hardest hit)

Total Fires (Human and Lightning) 143

Total Acres (Human and Lightning). . . . 488,533

Total Fires (Lightning) 98

Total Acres (Lightning) 477,573

Statewide 2007

Total Fires (Human and Lightning) 601

Total Acres (Human and Lightning). . . . 779,223

Total Fires (Lightning) 358

Total Acres (Lightning) 745,039

bluebunch wheatgrass. In areas where vegetation was killed and there are lower precipitation levels, native seeds may not be able to take hold, so a heartier, non-native species of plant seed may be used.

The second step to remediating a fire site after it has been stabilized is rehabilitation, which continues for up to three years on each site. Rehabilitation includes more seeding in areas, planting shrubs and trees, fixing fences and returning to the site over time to identify areas that will not recover, where the potential for invasion of cheatgrass and weeds will be high.

“Seeding and seedling plantings need to be done within tight windows of opportunity,” Warren said. “The quick establishment of seedlings, or young plants,

provides crucial habitat for various wildlife species, including sage grouse and big game. As more of these habitats are affected by wildfires, timely rehabilitation of priority areas needs to be completed. Re-establishment of important big game winter range, for example, can prevent large-scale die offs of mule deer and pronghorn antelope in future heavy snow years."

Fortunately, BLM isn't alone in annual fire recovery efforts: the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), county and city partners and even private citizens step up to the plate to help. The July 2007 Thomas fire in Winnemucca is a perfect example.

"The Thomas fire was a community fire, where many people were evacuated from their homes," said Terri Barton, emergency

FUN FACTS – Did you know?

Between implementing emergency stabilization plans right after last year's fires and burned area rehabilitation efforts, BLM's work covered almost 633,000 acres across Nevada in 2007. During those efforts, more than 880,000 pounds of seed was applied either through ground or aerial methods.

Some seed, like sagebrush, is extremely small. In fact, depending on the type of sagebrush, there can be as many as two million seeds per pound!



stabilization and rehabilitation coordinator for BLM's Winnemucca Field Office. "There was a lot of community and agency cooperation. The BLM, Humboldt County, the City and NDOW worked together to seed and plant burned areas."

In fact, for the 2007 fire season alone, NDOW pitched in almost 68,000 pounds of seed!

As the new fire season approaches, BLM's staff of fire stabilization and rehabilitation experts is prepared to battle the aftermath of the blazes that will once again claim parts of Nevada.

BLM and Nevada Department of Wildlife employees and volunteers plan sagebrush seedlings to restore wildlife habitat in the Winnemucca area burned by the 2007 Thomas Canyon Fire. BLM photo by Terri Barton.

Heather Emmons

Nevada State Office

Beware of Holes in the Ground

It's not uncommon for a hiker or off-highway vehicle rider out on public lands to come across a hole in the ground that looks interesting to explore. Nevada is home to thousands of abandoned mine land (AML) shafts and adits. Perhaps 50,000 of them are serious safety hazards. The temptation to take a look must be avoided. These sites are notoriously dangerous. Toxic gases, falling rocks, hidden internal shafts, old explosives and poisonous snakes are common. Recent injuries and fatalities in adjacent states have underscored the problems posed by these hazards.

BLM and the Nevada Division of Minerals (NDOM) are aggressively inventorying and securing the most hazardous sites. Many times the initial work involves fencing and signing by NDOM, often with the aid of volunteers such as prospector groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Eagle Scouts and others. But, fences are a temporary fix.

With that in mind, BLM and NDOM began a program of permanent closures a few years back. Efforts are centered on hazards near towns and cities, as well as other areas of high public use such as hiking and off-road vehicle riding. The first two years of the effort resulted in small-scale work on backfills in the Las Vegas area. Those efforts established a program in which active mining, trucking and equipment

companies donate time, manpower and equipment in support of the work.

Remediating abandoned mines means more than just filling holes with rocks. Many have become important habitat for bats and birds. Abandoned mines may also include historical features like buildings and head frames, which are vital components of the cultural record of Nevada. Before closure, every site must be surveyed for cultural and historical attributes, and the results carefully documented. If conditions warrant, sites must be closed with vandal-proof gates or cupolas (low towers) that restrict human access while



LEFT: A chain link fence built to keep people away from a dangerous abandoned mine hole is vandalized. RIGHT: A welded and cemented barrier was installed to replace the fence.
Photos by A.J. Mitchell, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

THE GROUND

still allowing use by wildlife. In other cases, entrance features are closed with expanding foam or cable nets to preserve historical features while protecting public land users.

Through coordination among NDOM, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, bat biologists and students, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office and with funding from land sales in the Las Vegas valley, more than 150 hazardous sites have been closed since October, mostly in Clark County.

These successes have inspired BLM to seek funding from land sales to expand AML projects into Lincoln and White

Pine counties in eastern Nevada, which have become eligible for funding under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Visitors to public lands still need to be wary of interesting holes in the ground, but they can look forward to safer landscapes where wildlife is protected and encouraged, where history is preserved, and where they may enjoy the public lands without the risk of a tragic encounter with an abandoned mine.

Chris Ross

Nevada State Office



Volunteers “Show the Love” for Public Lands

Volunteers are an indispensable asset to keeping public lands cleaned up and repaired. Last year, nearly 2,000 people contributed 77,139 hours of volunteer work an equivalent of 43 work year with a value of more than \$1.4 million dollars!

This is work that the BLM would not be able to accomplish without the assistance of volunteers.

The highest volunteer hours were in the recreation, cultural, historical and support services programs.



TOP: A volunteer helps out during a cleanup at the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area. **BOTTOM:** Volunteers stabilize and restore the Yellow Rock Garage on the Fox Homestead near High Rock Canyon in the Black Rock Desert National Conservation Area.

Volunteers at the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area logged in 21,663 hours, the most for any site in the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.

Some volunteer program highlights:

- Fox Homestead “Yellow Rock Garage” Stabilization and Restoration project—the BLM Winnemucca Field Office completed a two-year project to stabilize a historic structure at risk of collapse. The building is restored to near original and authentic conditions.
- Carson River Corridor Cleanup—the BLM Carson City Field Office, Kiwanis Club of Carson City and Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch sponsor this National Public Lands Day event. Two hundred and twenty-five volunteers from various clubs, non-profit organizations and private citizens cleaned up and removed 150 cubic yards of debris and five junked cars along the Carson River.
- Red Rock Day—the beauty of Red Rock Canyon draws a committed volunteer force to keep the area clean. A partnership with the Southern Nevada Interagency Volunteer Program and Friends of Red Rock Canyon resulted in a turnout of 250 volunteers.

For information about volunteering on your public lands, call BLM Nevada State Volunteer Coordinator Rochelle Ocava at (775) 861-6588. A list of volunteer opportunities with BLM and other federal agencies is available at www.volunteer.gov/gov/.

Rochelle Ocava
Nevada State Office

NATIONAL AWARD Given to Nevada Volunteer

Congratulations and thank you to Brian Doyle, recipient of a 2008 BLM National "Making a Difference" Volunteer Award. Doyle received the award at a ceremony in Washington, D. C., on May 6. He is actively involved with the BLM Carson City office as a volunteer, public land steward and advocate for shared public land use.

He was instrumental in the creation and development of the Pine Nut Mountain Trails Association (PNMTA), a volunteer organization that includes motorized and non-motorized users sharing the common goal of keeping public lands available for continued public use. The PNMTA has built information stations at several locations in the Carson, Minden and Gardnerville areas and held annual public land clean-ups, removing tons of garbage from public lands.

Doyle also helped initiate and has hosted the Nevada Trails TV Show sponsored by the PNMTA and produced and televised on the Carson City Public Access Station. The 30-minute program provides interviews of local recreation organizations, special events, product reviews and safety tips for a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities.

Mark Struble

Carson City Field Office



BLM volunteer Brian Doyle recently received a national "Making a Difference" award.

GREAT BASIN TEACHERS WORKSHOP: FIRE, ROCK AND WATER

July 20-25: Camp Success, Ely, Nevada. Lessons teachers can adapt for all grade levels

- **Mineral Identification**
- **Edible Geology**
- **Caves**
- **Fire Ecology**
- **Oil & Gas in Nevada**
- **Understanding Water in the Great Basin**

Field Tours, Earn In-service Credits, \$170 includes education materials, all meals and housing

Contact: Martha Braddock, 775-289-1802 or martha_braddock@nv.blm.gov



Pronghorn antelope northeast of Elko. Wildlife and wild horses depend on good winter range, especially during a heavy snow year. Wildland fire didn't burn here, but fire has destroyed habitat important for winter survival in other areas around the state. Photo by Ken Gray, Nevada Department of Wildlife.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
1340 Financial Blvd.
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, NV 89520-0006

**FIRST-CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PERMIT NO. G-76**

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Address Correction Requested

